

Late Backup

67 67

PUBLIC HEARING

August 6, 2009

My name is Stuart Hersh, and I am a retired City employee. Like most Austinites, I rent. Like all of you I care about public safety, housing affordability and access for people with disabilities. Like you, I also care for my former colleagues who provide important services that make sure that these community goals actually happen.

With these goals in mind, I recommend that you adopt the proposed City Budget with some modifications:

1. Spend the revenue you generate for building permits and inspections on these functions. Case law requires you to do so. **Cities get in trouble when they use building permit revenue to balance their General Fund.**
2. Retain six (6) vacant building inspection positions and fund these vacant positions for half the fiscal year, since it takes about a year to train a new inspector. Inspectors are the people who enforce accessibility, visitability, building safety, and zoning requirements if construction activity increases. **If the amount of revenue continues to exceed the cost of delivering these services, there should be no negative budget impact.**
3. Require City reviewers to resume fast-track review of S.M.A.R.T. Housing applications and volume builder applications that are not subject to McMansion standards. This needs to be included as a performance measure. **There should be no budget impact if you direct the staff to put these priority applications on the top of the review pile each day.**
4. Require Affordability Impact Statements on proposed ordinances. A keyword search of the City Clerk's link showed that 252 assessments of impact on housing affordability had been presented prior to last November, but none have been attached to Council agenda items since. **There should be no budget impact in resuming compliance with Austin City Code requirements.**
5. Do not furlough employees who are eligible for overtime pay and are not first-responders (Police, Fire, and EMS). **If you are going to exempt first-responders, please exempt these line service-providers as well. This minimizes the impact on customers who pay for services and Austin residents who receive some of these City services at no charge.**

Let's learn from our last comparable budget crisis and retain critical services.

Stuart Hersh shersh@austin.rr.com
1307 Kinney Avenue #117, Austin, TX 78704-2279
(512) 587-5093